

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----044247 111331Z /45

O 111235Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9195
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4662

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: MARR UN LE IS
SUBJ: SOUTH LEBANON: REMARKS OF UNIFIL POLITICAL ADVISOR,
JEAN CLAUDE AIME

REF: (A) BEIRUT 4588, (B) BEIRUT 4650

1. UNIFIL POLITICAL ADVISOR JEAN CLAUDE AIME DINED
WITH DCM AND ME EVENING OF AUGUST 10. AIME MADE
ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT NO SOLUTION FOR THE KAWKABA
MESS IS IN SIGHT. HIS REMARKS:

2. EYTAN ET AL.

A. THE AUGUST 9 MEETING BETWEEN ISRAELI CHIEF OF
STAFF EYTAN AND UNIFIL COMMANDER ERSKINE HAD BEEN A
DISASTER. EYTAN HAD MADE CLEAR THAT UNDER NO CIRCUM-
STANCES WOULD THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS ALLOW THE
LEBANESE ARMY INTO THEIR ENCLAVES OR TO CROSS THEM

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TO GET TO TIBNIN. EYTAN ALSO SAID THAT IT WOULD BE
"ILL ADVISED" FOR THE LEBANESE EVEN TO TRANSFER
PART OF THEIR TROOPS TO TIBNIN BY HELICOPTER.

B. AIME COMMENTED TO US THAT THIS MEANT THAT
THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WOULD CERTAINLY OPEN
FIRE ON THE LEBANESE BATTALION IF IT ATTEMPTED TO

ENTER OR CROSS THROUGH THE ENCLAVES. MOREOVER, AIME INTERPRETED EYTAN'S REMARKS AS MEANING THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS WOULD PROBABLY SHELL EVEN A SYMBOLIC CONTINGENT OF LEBANESE SOLDIERS IN TIBNIN, EVEN IF THEY WERE TRANSPORTED BY HELICOPTER. AIME WARNED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO HAVE THE EXPLICIT AGREEMENT OF THE ISRAELIS AND CHRISTIAN MILITIAS BEFORE ANY MOVE OF ANY KIND TO TIBNIN WERE ATTEMPTED.

C. AIME ALSO REMARKED TO US THAT EYTAN AND BEN GAL WERE HARDLINERS ON ARMY TO SOUTH ISSUE, WHEREAS WEIZMAN AND GAZIT WERE MORE REASONABLE. AIME BELIEVED THAT EYTAN AND BEN GAL COULD STICK TO THEIR HARDLINE STANCE BECAUSE THEY HAD BACKING WITHIN THE GOI, QUITE POSSIBLY BEGIN HIMSELF, AND IN THE KNESSET.

3. MEETING AT YARZE.

A. AIME HAD ATTENDED MEETING AFTERNOON AUGUST 10 AT YARZE WITH ERSKINE, CUQ, ARMY COMMANDER KHOURY, G-2 JOHNNY ABDO, AND BATTALION COMMANDER ADIB SAAD. ERSKINE HAD RELAYED TO THE LEBANESE THE DISQUIETING RESULTS OF HIS MEETING WITH EYTAN. KHOURY INDICATED THE GOL WOULD DO NOTHING FOR THE MOMENT--NEITHER SEND MORE TROOPS SOUTH NOR ATTEMPT TO MOVE THE BATTALION AT KAWKABA TO TIBNIN. ABDO HINTED, HOWEVER, THAT
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THE LEBANESE COULD SAVE THEIR HONOR ONLY BY FORCING THEIR WAY THROUGH TO TIBNIN.

B. AIME COMMENTED TO US THAT HE DEEPLY HOPED THAT THE LEBANESE WOULD NOT TRY TO FIGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH. HE SAID AS HE HAD ON AUGUST 9 (REF A) THAT IT WOULD BE A "SLAUGHTER." HE FEARED THE GOL TO SAVE ITS FACE MIGHT SACRIFICE THE LIVES OF MANY MEN FOR ABSOLUTELY NO PURPOSE.

4. NEED FOR THE LEBANESE ARMY.

A. AIME DID NOT SEE HOW THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD HELP UNIFIL FULFILL ITS FUNCTION AT THE PRESENT MOMENT. NEITHER THE LEBANESE ARMY NOR THE UNITED NATIONS WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONTROL OVER THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES OR CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. MOREOVER, AIME SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY BELIEVED THE UNITED NATIONS WOULD RENEW UNIFIL'S MANDATE WHETHER THE LEBANESE ARMY WAS PRESENT OR NOT.

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EXDIS

B. AIME ALSO BELIEVED THE PRESENT TROOP CONTRI-
BUTORS WOULD MAINTAIN THEIR CONTINGENTS IN UNIFIL,
EVEN WITHOUT A LEBANESE ARMY PRESENCE. HE SAID THE
QUAI WAS PUTTING GREAT PRESSURE ON FRENCH OFFICIALS
HERE, SUCH AS CUQ AND AMBASSADOR ARGOD, TO GET THE
LEBANESE TO SEND THE ARMY SOUTH. AIME THOUGHT THE
FRENCH WOULD STAY REGARDLESS, HOWEVER, SINCE THERE
WAS REALLY NO POLITICALLY FEASIBLE WAY FOR THEM TO
PULL OUT NOW.

5. MOOD OF THE MILITIAS.

A. AIME CAUTIONED THAT THE MILITIAS ARE VERY EXCITED
AND THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE NOT GOING TO CALM THEM
DOWN. HE SAID THE MILITIAS' MOOD WAS PARTLY RELATED
TO THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT, AND THAT THEIR SUSPICIONS
HAD BEEN HEIGHTENED BY THE SYRIAN SHELLING THERE.
AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE LEBANESE BATTALION WAS
NOT EVEN SAFE IN THE KAWKABA AREA, AND THE MILITIAS
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MIGHT WELL SHELL IT THERE AGAIN.

6. POSSIBLE SOLUTION.

GIVEN THE VIRTUAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF GOING ON TO TIBNIN, AND THE DANGER OF REMAINING IN KAWKABA, AIME BELIEVED THERE WAS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION AT THE MOMENT. THE BATTALION SHOULD WITHDRAW 8-10 KILOMETERS NORTH OF KAWKABA, WHERE IT WOULD BE OUT OF DANGER, AND SIT AND WAIT FOR TWO TO THREE WEEKS. DURING THIS TIME, THE MILITIA MIGHT CALM DOWN SOMEWHAT AND NEGOTIATIONS COULD PROCEED. AIME ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THAT EVEN AFTER THE TWO OR THREE WEEKS HAD PASSED, A SOLUTION REMAINED UNLIKELY.

7. COMMENT:

IT SEEMS EVIDENT THAT EVEN IF THE LEBANESE ARMY BATTALION WERE ABLE TO GO TO TIBNIN BY ROAD OR HELICOPTER, IT WOULD RUN VERY HIGH RISKS ONCE IT ARRIVED. DO NOT BELIEVE WE CAN ADVISE THE LEBANESE TO GO TO TIBNIN SO THAT THEY CAN BE POUNDED BY RIGHTIST ARTILLERY. PERHAPS THE MILITIAS CAN BE COOLED DOWN, BUT THIS IS FAR FROM CLEAR. ISRAELIS SEEM TO HAVE BEEN WORKING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTO SO FAR. PARKER

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